

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising providing a capability for a machine to perform operations comprising:

discovering information relating to an accessibility state of one or more communication channels associated with a message recipient;

maintaining a data repository comprising the discovered accessibility state information; and

routing a message to the message recipient based on information in the data repository.

2. The method of claim 1 in which providing a capability for a machine to perform operations comprises providing one or more software processes capable of performing the operations on a computer system.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the maintained data repository further comprises user preferences relating to user preferred message routing paths.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the maintained data repository further comprises information about the user that

facilitates context-appropriate message routing decisions to be made.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein a context-appropriate message routing decision is based at least in part on a level of obtrusiveness of an associated communications channel.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the discovered accessibility state information includes information relating to whether the recipient is reachable via a communications channel.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the discovered accessibility state information includes information relating to whether the recipient is available via a communications channel.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the discovered accessibility state information includes information relating to whether the recipient is available via a direct connection or a bridged connection.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein routing the message comprises choosing one or more communications channels associated with the user such that the message is (i) likely to reach the user, (ii) in a timely manner, and/or (iii) at a context-appropriate level of obtrusiveness.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein discovering information comprises receiving information from a communications service provider relating to the message recipient's communications status and/or activity.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein discovering information comprises receiving information from the message recipient relating to the message recipient's communications status.

12. The method of claim 1 further comprising providing a capability for a machine to receive from a message sender a device-independent identifier uniquely identifying the message recipient.

13. Machine-readable instructions, embodied in a medium or a propagated signal, for causing the machine to perform operations comprising:

discover information relating to an accessibility state of one or more communication channels associated with a message recipient;

maintain a data repository comprising the discovered accessibility state information; and

route a message to the message recipient based on information in the data repository.

14. The instructions of claim 13 wherein the instructions to maintain the data repository further comprises instructions to maintain user preferences relating to user preferred message routing paths.

15. The instructions of claim 13 wherein the instructions to maintain the data repository further comprise instructions to maintain information about the user that facilitates context-appropriate message routing decisions to be made.

16. The instructions of claim 15 wherein a context-appropriate message routing decision is based at least in part on a level of obtrusiveness of an associated communications channel.

17. The instructions of claim 13 wherein the discovered accessibility state information includes information relating to whether the recipient is reachable via a communications channel.

18. The instructions of claim 13 wherein the discovered accessibility state information includes information relating to whether the recipient is available via a communications channel.

19. The instructions of claim 13 wherein the discovered accessibility state information includes information relating to

whether the recipient is available via a direct connection or a bridged connection.

20. The instructions of claim 13 wherein the instructions to route the message comprise instructions to choose one or more communications channels associated with the user such that the message is (i) likely to reach the user, (ii) in a timely manner, and/or (iii) at a context-appropriate level of obtrusiveness.

21. The instructions of claim 13 wherein the instructions to discover information comprise instructions to receive information from a communications service provider relating to the message recipient's communications status and/or activity.

22. The instructions of claim 13 wherein the instructions to discover information comprise instructions to receive information from the message recipient relating to the message recipient's communications status.

23. The instructions of claim 13 further comprising instructions to receive from a message sender a device-independent identifier uniquely identifying the message recipient.

24. A message-routing system comprising:

one or more discovery processes configured to discover information relating to an accessibility state of one or more communication channels associated with a message recipient;

a data repository configured to store the discovered accessibility state information; and

a message routing decision process configured to route a message to the message recipient based on information in the data repository.

25. The system of claim 24 wherein the data repository further is configured to store user preferences relating to user preferred message routing paths.

26. The system of claim 24 wherein the data repository further is configured to store information about the user that facilitates context-appropriate message routing decisions to be made.

27. The system of claim 24 wherein the discovered accessibility state information includes information relating to whether the recipient is available via a direct connection or a bridged connection.

28. The system of claim 24 wherein the message routing decision process is configured to choose one or more communications channels associated with the user such that the message is (i) likely to reach the user, (ii) in a timely manner, and/or (iii) at a context-appropriate level of obtrusiveness.

29. The system of claim 24 wherein the one or more discovery processes are configured to receive information from a communications service provider or from the message recipient, or both, relating to the message recipient's communications status and/or activity.